

## 7. MARSH HARRIER *CIRCUS AERUGINOSUS* PRE-ROOSTING ON TREES IN KEOLADEO NATIONAL PARK, BHARATPUR, RAJASTHAN

The Keoladeo National Park (27° 7.6' to 27° 12.2' N, 77° 29.5' to 77° 33.2' E) in Rajasthan is a known roost of Marsh Harriers (Samant *et al.* 1995). During the present study (1997-99) more than 150 Marsh Harriers were recorded roosting in the grasslands of the Park.

The harriers roost communally on the ground outside the breeding season (Newton 1979). The Marsh Harriers were observed roosting communally in the southeast corner of the Park on the ground among tall grasses in Block-G (locally called Koladehar). They started arriving at the roost area about an hour before sunset and pre-roosted on trees lining the roost area. This behaviour is unusual, as they have never been recorded pre-roosting on trees elsewhere. They generally pre-roost on bare ground before settling in the actual roosting site (Clarke 1996, Donald 1905).

By pre-roosting in the open, harriers probably attract their roosting allies to a particular roost to increase the roost size, as has been seen in other species (Zahavi 1971). Roosting communally in big flocks has its own advantages (Ward and Zahavi 1973). Pre-roosting on tree-tops by Marsh Harriers in the Park may be for the same reason, as the grass here is very tall (about 2.5 m). Pre-roosting on the ground would not be beneficial, as they would not be visible to their conspecifics. Another possible reason for pre-roosting on trees could be to

avoid the mammalian predators lurking around, such as the Jungle Cat *Felis chaus*, Jackal *Canis aureus*, and Striped Hyena *Hyaena hyaena*, that are frequently sighted in the grassland.

During the winters of 1997-98 and 1998-99, 74% of the pre-roosting (n = 3753) was recorded on trees.

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## 8. BLUE-WINGED PARAKEET *PSITTACULA COLUMBOIDES*, FAMILY PSITTACIDAE, FEEDING ON *LORANTHUS* LEAVES

On March 5, 2001, I was birding near Doodha Sagar in Mahaveer Wildlife Sanctuary, Goa when I saw a Blue-winged Parakeet (*Psittacula columboides*) and Indian Hanging-parrot (*Loriculus vernalis*) on an Arjuna tree (*Terminalia arjuna*).

On close observation, I found that both the species were feeding on the green leaves of a parasitic plant on the Arjuna tree. The half chewed leaves were collected and later identified as *Loranthus longiflorus*. On March

6, 2001, the same activity was observed in Castle Rock village on the Goa - Karnataka border, Joyda taluka, Uttara Kannada district, Karnataka.

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